

U.S. Fire Administration
FIGHT FIRE WITH FACTS

Portable Generators

Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed but they can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using them are carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock or electrocution, and fire. The U.S. Fire Administration and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) offer the following life-saving tips that could make a big difference for you and your community.

Following these simple fire safety tips can increase your survival rate dramatically.

Portable Generators Life-Saving Tips

- ☑ Always use generators outdoors, away from doors, windows, and vents. NEVER use generators inside homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces, or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- ☑ Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- ☑ Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide alarms in your home, following the manufacturer's instructions.
- ☑ Test CO detectors often and replace batteries when needed.
- ☑ Keep the generator dry. Use on a dry surface under an open, canopy-like structure.
- ☑ Dry your hands before touching the generator.
- ☑ Plug appliances directly into the generator or use a heavy-duty outdoor-rated extension cord. Make sure the entire extension cord is free of cuts or tears and the plug has all three prongs, especially a grounding pin.
- ☑ NEVER plug the generator into a wall outlet (known as back-feeding). This practice can cause an electrocution risk to utility workers and others served by the same utility transformer.
- ☑ If you must connect a generator to house wiring, have a qualified electrician install appropriate equipment. Your utility company may be able to install an appropriate transfer switch as well.
- ☑ Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts could ignite.
- ☑ Always store fuel outside of living areas in properly labeled, nonglass containers.
- ☑ Store fuel away from any fuel-burning appliance.

Did you know?

- ▶ From 1990 to 2003, 228 carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning deaths were associated with portable generators, as reported to the CPSC.
- ▶ From 2001 to 2003, the number of reported CO poisoning deaths associated with portable generators doubled.
- ▶ The most common improper placement of portable generators that result in injury or death are in crawl spaces, basements, attached garages, within or in close proximity to the home.
- ▶ For more information on how you can help prevent fires and fire deaths, please contact your local fire department on a nonemergency number or the U.S. Fire Administration at (800) 238-3358 or visit www.usfa.fema.gov or www.firesafety.gov.



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